

# **WABASH RIVER HERITAGE CORRIDOR COMMISSION**

Meeting Minutes – January 9, 2008

Indianapolis, Indiana Government Center South, Conference Rooms 1 & 2

## **Voting Members Present:**

Adams County – John Friedt  
Allen County – Ron Zartman (alt)  
Carroll County – George Mears  
DNR – Dale Brier  
Gibson County - Sherrell Marginet  
Huntington County – Dave Hacker  
Knox County – Shane Cooper  
Miami County – Ken Einselen  
Parke County - Penny Cox  
Sullivan County – John Gettinger  
Tippecanoe County – Norman (Lucky) Neiburger  
Warren County – Greg Jones (alt)  
Vigo County – Keith Ruble (alt)

## **Non-Voting Members Present:**

DNR Historic Preservation & Archaeology – Frank Hurdis  
Indiana Office of Tourism – Jaime Fry  
INDOT - Ray Irvin

## **Non-Voting Members Not Present:**

IDEM - Martha Clark Mettler

## **Voting Members Absent w/o Proxy:**

Cass County – Janet Fawley  
Fountain County – no appointment yet  
Jay County - Faron Parr  
Posey County – Ralph Weinzapfel  
Vermillion County – no appointment yet  
Wells County - Keith Huffman

## **Proxies:**

None

## **Commission and DNR Staff Present:**

Ron James – WRHCC Executive Director  
Jewel Baxter – DNR Admin Pool  
Amber Caddell – DNR Admin Pool

## **Guests:**

Larry Clemens – Nature Conservancy  
Mike Mettler – Indiana State Dept. of Health  
David Rice, Phd. – W.C.B.C., New Harmony

## **Call to Order**

John Gettinger called the meeting to order at 1:05p.m. John asked everyone to introduce themselves and the county or organization they represented.

## **Review and Approval of the November 14, 2007 Meeting Minutes**

John asked for approval of the November 14, 2007 meeting minutes. Lucky Neiburger made a motion to approve the minutes and Keith Ruble seconded the motion and the minutes were approved as written.

## **Guest Speaker 1**

John Gettinger introduced Dr. David Rice, professor emeritus at S.I.U., now with the White County Bridge Commission, to present the issues surrounding the continued operation of the toll bridge over the Wabash River at New Harmony, Indiana. Dr Rice asked the Commission to investigate how it might assist in holding money for the bridge rehabilitation. Ray Irvin asked about the ratio of economic value to the cost of rehabilitation. Dr Rice estimated a \$7.3 million cost for the best rehab option. Economic value still needs to be researched. Dr. Rice will get back to the Commission on this. John Gettinger stated that the WRHCC had written a letter of support last year and stood ready to help in any way available.

## **Guest Speaker 2**

Larry Clements, Assistant State Director for Conservation Programs, of The Nature Conservancy in Indiana reported on the Conservancy's Wabash River Corridor program. He talked about the Wabash River and the study that is being made on what species are at risk in the river. He showed graphs on the data gathered and spoke about how the information is used to determine what reaches of the Wabash River are in need of help. TNC wants to know what needs done to facilitate conservation? This summer & fall, the Conservancy wants to set up Corridor public meetings. Keith Ruble made a motion to help TNC set up local public meetings, which was seconded by Ron Zartman. The motion passed.

## **President's Report (see attached)**

John Gettinger spoke with a handout. He spoke of further improvements at Merom Bluff. When asked what the Corridor Fund had bought, John stated that the Fund paid for the 211 stairs down the bluff, installed lights and modernized the facilities of the park on top of the bluff. John did state that the process was not complete yet. He spoke on the acreage that was purchased and how the cabin that was there had been opened up and a porch added for visitors to sit and look out over the river. He also noted that the trail for people in wheelchairs to view the river is now complete.

**Executive Director's Report (see attached)**

Ron James stated that most of his report was on the 2<sup>nd</sup> page of the agenda. He briefly spoke on the Mid America Trails and Greenway (MATAG) conference and having the honor of speaking to that gathering on behalf of the Corridor. He mentioned the article he wrote in the "Reflections" newsletter about the meeting.

**Finance Report (see attached)**

Dale Brier distributed Steve Morris' report and the latest financial reports (should read '08' not '07'). Dale drew attention to the expenditures under the Corridor budget and noted the Commission would have \$12,842 revert at the end of the fiscal year if not spent. He suggested the Commission consider major purchases or even minor purchasing and get it started due to the possible 'blackout dates' of 3/1/08 to sometime in April for purchasing, because of new programs being implemented. If the upgrade takes longer than expected, the May end of year deadlines would make buying things impossible.

The March retreat at Turkey Run was estimated to cost about \$4,000.00. This leaves \$8,000 that needed authorized to be spent before the end of the year.

The next item on Dale's list was about the reserved budget cuts. He explained the loss of an additional 3% due to budget cuts and how 2% had already been taken in the beginning of the year for a total of 5% cuts for all agencies. He was asked if the reserve applied to items such as contracts, materials or supplies. Dale answered that he did not know.

Reimbursement for travel requires a W9 and a direct deposit form. Dale stated that he had forms with him and any who did not complete these forms would not be receiving payment for travel.

The next item mentioned was the River Road signs. Ron stated the purchase of 200 was approved but only 100 have been ordered and received. The cost was about \$2000.00 for 100 signs.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS****Nominating Report**

John Gettinger asked Norman (Lucky) Neiburger for the nominating report and Lucky stated that they wanted to nominate the current officers. It was so moved and seconded. John then asked that the current officers' state their names and positions so that the new members might get to know who they are. John Gettinger introduced himself as chairman and Lucky introduces himself as vice chairman. The nomination was carried and approved by the committee.

**Legislative Report**

Mike Mettler prefaced his report by noting that prior to 2001 the Corridor used to have grant funds to help projects in the corridor. Last July, Ron J. suggested using the royalties collected for minerals extracted from under Indiana's navigable waterways. This was approved as 'policy' by the Commission. Mike M. then contacted Rep. Dan Leonard, R-Huntington. Rep. Leonard agreed to help create a draft bill. The language of the bill and how to get it adopted was discussed. It was suggested that a Democrat introduce the bill to the house. Rep. Dale Grubb was contacted to be author with Rep. Leonard as co-author. The Bill is referred to as the "Wabash River Heritage Corridor Fund", HB 1115. It creates a non-reverting fund to be used for corridor projects and grants, but not for administrative expense of the Commission. In 2006, royalties from extractions under the navigable waters of Indiana brought \$182,430 into the state general fund (after DNR expenses). John stressed the importance of this Bill. A suggestion was made by Ray Irvin to get a legislator in every county of the Corridor to co-sponsor the bill. John stated that he was going to speak with Dale G. about this. Ron will send a copy of the bill and letter head to each River Commissioner so personal notes to each legislator on the Corridor would be mailed.

**OLD BUSINESS****Conservation Day**

John moved the agenda on to discuss Conservation Day at the state house on Jan.10, 2008. John explained what is usual on this day and that there is some contact with the legislators at this event. A question as to the WRHCC becoming an Indiana Conservation Alliance (INCA) member was raised. Ron stated that we've been rejected because we are a state agency.

**Signs**

Ron James talked to PEN about the large bridge signs a month ago to check on status. The signs were approved and ordered nearly a year ago, but they have not been received. Ron stated that he would be making another call to Shari to find out the sign's status. The Commission suggested Ron write a letter of inquiry. The river road signs and the community signs were shown. Suggestions for placement of these signs were made by John Gettinger.

**Banks of the Wabash, Inc. (BOW)**

Ken Einselen reported on the meeting that was held in Covington, IN, at the end of November. Ken explained that the nominations for the River Rewards were still open and that progress was being made on the website. John explained to the new members of the commission that BOW is a 501c3 and that they hold money for river projects when destined for the

WRHCC from other than State funding. John spoke of the thousands received as a donation from the “River Odyssey” artists last year. John said that BOW hopes to organize river interest groups of 25 or more people from each county.

### **Turkey Run Retreat**

John told the Commission that someone from each county needs to attend the retreat at Turkey Run Inn on March 11- 13 for strategic planning. Ron J. said that reservations should be made as soon as possible and that the Dogwood Room has been reserved for meetings. He then went over the itinerary for the retreat and gave information on the room rental rates. Dale asked Ron J. to get the contact information of the new commission members, so that invitations could be sent to them.

### **River Rally**

John spoke on the rally at the Sawmill Creek Resort in Huron, Ohio, on May 2nd-5<sup>th</sup>. The commission will be sending the executive director and a board member at no cost to them. Ken E said he would attend.

John G. spoke on the nomination of Bernie Dahl for a “River Hero” award. Ron J. said that he needed a minimum of 3 letters in support of Bernie’s nomination by Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> should cover leadership, inspiration and techniques. Ron said that River Network was the group that runs the rally and that the information needed for the application was on their website.

### **Newsletters & Corridor Communications**

Ron J. spoke on needing articles for the 08-09 “L’Esprit de Ouabache” as well as the “Wabash Reflections” newsletters. He said that the articles needed to be at least 250 words. Ray Irvin, Keith Ruble and John Gettinger committed to writing articles. Ron asked that these articles be sent to him by Feb. 29<sup>th</sup>. John G. suggested the “L’Esprit” could use an inviting ‘tourism’ style article as its front piece.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **County Historian Videos**

John G. brought up the county historians. He suggested the commission grant each county’s historian enough money to do a 3 minute video/pictorial of the Wabash River’s history in their community. A limit of \$250.00 for each county was mentioned. There also was a discussion on having a common format for each video. John decided that the discussion would be tabled for now and they would revisit the idea at the Turkey Run retreat.

#### **Schedule of Meetings**

John talked about the 2008 schedule of meetings. Meetings will be at Turkey Run, Parke County, in March; Gibson County in May; back to Montezuma, Parke County, in July; and Merom, Sullivan County, in September. The November meeting will be either in Logansport, Cass County, or in Indianapolis.

#### **Announcements**

Dale discussed the Commission’s computer software problems and how much support from the State costs per computer. Ron J. said he did not currently need any new software or a new computer.

There were no other announcements or comments.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:15 pm.